

WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

JUNE 2002



State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

Unemployment Rates Drop in Every County of the State

Employment in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area increased in May as manufacturing posted its first increase in nine months. The increase in jobs helped to reduce the number of unemployed residents in the metro area and that produced a lower unemployment rate. Unemployment rates tumbled in every metropolitan area and county in the state resulting in a lower rate for the state.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metro area in May was 4.9 percent, down from 5.7 percent in April. For the combined West Central region the unemployment rate declined to 4.8 percent from 5.4 percent (not seasonally adjusted). The Wisconsin unemployment rate in May was 4.8 percent, seasonally adjusted, down from 5.4 percent while the national rate declined to 5.8 percent from 6.0 percent in April.

In spite of a welcomed drop in the metro area unemployment rate the increase in the number of employed in May was rather dismal. Even though manufacturing employers reported the first increase in jobs in nine months, anemic job creation in retail trade and a reduction in jobs in state government reduced gains in employment from other sectors.

Even though employment increased in both Chippewa and Eau Claire counties, the increase was less-than-normal for the month. When seasonally adjusted that weakness produced a decline in employment.

The soft job market was only one factor effecting a shortage of new job seekers into the labor force in May. The numbers of new job seekers is shrinking as the labor force age population grows older. Every spring there are fewer young people seeking summer jobs.

The labor force in the Eau Claire metro area did shrink in May. The current labor force includes 84,500 participants and is smaller than the April labor force of 85,700. Both the number of employed and unemployed declined in May. Employment dropped from 80,800 in April to 80,400 in May; while unemployment declined from 4,900 to 4,100.

Another reason for a reduction in the number of unemployed was 950 fewer residents filing for unemployment compensation benefits in May than in April. Even with the decline the number of claimants remains higher than one year ago. Nearly 2,750 claims were filed for benefits during the survey week in May compared with 3,700 in April and 1,680 one year earlier.

The greatest job gains occurred in industries with large seasonal fluctuations. Construction employers hired another 600 workers in May bringing the total number of additional jobs this spring to over 1,200. Currently, there are roughly 4,000 construction jobs in the Eau Claire-Chippewa area.

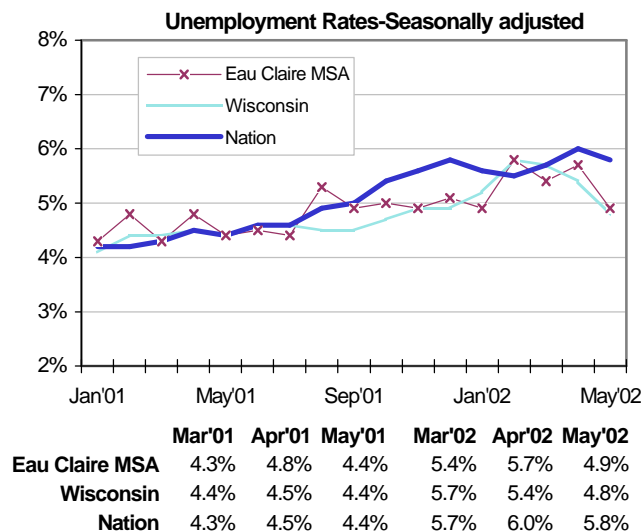
Jobs with services industry employers increased by 220 in May and climbed to 22,760. Since January, the number of services jobs increased by 900. Retail trade employers added 180 jobs in May bringing the total number of workers to 17,730. There are 600 additional jobs in retail trade since January.

One reason for the below average increase in employment in May was the loss of 500 jobs in state government. The loss was primarily with the University of Wisconsin and actually occurred in April. Due to late reporting it appears in the May estimates.

In Dunn County, the loss of jobs with state government was reported in April and the current estimate shows the return to work of those workers following a temporary lay-off. Government employment generally improved in the entire West Central region in May as seasonal workers returned to jobs in road and park maintenance, and recreation.

All of the rural counties in the West Central region reported an increase in construction jobs, as well as retail trade and services. Manufacturing jobs increased in all but Polk County.

Since January, employers in the rural counties added nearly 6,200 jobs: in Barron County 1,000 jobs were added; in Clark 400 jobs; in Dunn, 700 jobs; in Pepin, 170 jobs; in Pierce, 1,500 jobs; in Polk, 550 jobs; and in St. Croix, 1,800 jobs. All of the rural counties report



more jobs this May than one year ago. The additional jobs helped to push total employment over 140,000 in the rural counties of the region.

As employment increased, unemployment declined. Like the metro area, the number of new entrants into the labor force was weak, reducing the number of unemployed. There were 3,600 less unemployed in the rural counties yet employment increased by only 2,200.

Never the less, the reduction in the number of unemployed brought some of the lowest unemployment rates since last fall. The unemployment rate in Barron County

dropped to 4.6 percent from 7.1 percent in April. In Clark County the rate dropped from 8.8 to 5.4 percent; in Dunn, it declined from 5.1 to 3.4 percent; and in Pepin, the unemployment rate dropped from 7.0 to 5.2 percent. The unemployment rate in May in Pierce County declined from 5.5 percent in April to 3.6 percent; in Polk County it declined from 8.2 to 5.4 percent; and in St. Croix County the rate dropped from 7.9 to 5.4 percent. The current rate in St. Croix County is the highest May unemployment rate since 1983.

May 2002 Estimates	Wisconsin	EC MSA	Barron	Clark	Dunn	Pepin	Pierce	Polk	St.Croix
Civilian Labor Force*	3,040,400	84,900	24,400	15,900	23,100	3,100	21,400	23,900	35,500
Employed	2,902,700	81,100	23,300	15,100	22,300	3,000	20,600	22,600	33,500
Unemployed	137,700	3,700	1,100	900	800	200	800	1,300	1,900
Unemployment rate(%)	4.5%	4.4%	4.6%	5.4%	3.4%	5.2%	3.6%	5.4%	5.4%
Total jobs, all industries**	2,844,600	77,500	22,000	10,100	16,300	2,200	11,400	15,500	28,000
Construction & Mining	129,850	3,990	850	630	660	170	450	790	1,610
Manufacturing	564,110	11,420	6,500	3,070	2,310	150	1,350	4,620	6,690
Transportation & Public Util.	132,670	3,320	710	460	530	110	520	480	1,080
Wholesale Trade	138,220	3,260	610	540	650	250	200	400	710
Retail Trade	505,750	17,730	4,350	1,280	4,140	490	2,430	2,880	6,430
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	152,130	2,880	410	230	430	70	320	470	1,000
Services	794,370	22,760	3,890	1,700	2,860	390	2,200	3,210	6,690
Government	427,530	12,180	4,680	2,160	4,700	540	3,950	2,670	3,800
Change from previous month									
Civilian Labor Force*	-5,900	-1,200	-100	-400	100	0	-200	-300	-700
Employed	30,400	400	500	200	600	100	200	400	300
Unemployed	-36,300	-1,700	-600	-600	-500	-100	-300	-700	-900
Unemployment rate(%)	-1.2%	-1.9%	-2.5%	-3.4%	-2.0%	-1.9%	-1.5%	-2.8%	-2.5%
Total jobs, all industries**	35,100	600	500	100	400	0	300	300	700
Construction & Mining	11,600	600	100	100	100	0	0	100	100
Manufacturing	1,430	50	0	0	40	-10	0	-40	90
Transportation & Public Util.	1,910	30	10	30	10	0	20	10	10
Wholesale Trade	1,410	50	40	0	20	10	10	10	30
Retail Trade	8,240	180	180	20	50	30	40	130	130
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	720	10	10	10	0	0	0	-10	10
Services	11,480	220	100	-50	60	10	80	60	270
Government	-1,730	-530	40	0	160	-20	70	30	30
Change from one year ago									
Civilian Labor Force*	62,300	1,200	500	-300	600	0	200	800	1,000
Employed	49,100	800	500	0	600	0	200	800	400
Unemployed	13,200	500	0	-300	0	0	-100	0	600
Unemployment rate(%)	0.3%	0.5%	-0.1%	-1.6%	0.1%	0.7%	-0.3%	-0.3%	1.6%
Total jobs, all industries**	1,300	-300	300	100	300	0	400	400	1,000
Construction & Mining	0	600	-100	100	0	0	0	0	100
Manufacturing	-21,930	-860	-20	10	30	-10	30	20	-110
Transportation & Public Util.	-3,550	-50	30	20	10	0	-10	-10	-20
Wholesale Trade	350	130	30	0	0	-10	-10	0	40
Retail Trade	3,930	-310	70	-20	0	10	60	80	470
Finance,Insurance,Real Estate	2,470	140	-30	0	20	0	10	20	90
Services	17,060	580	130	-10	50	0	20	160	250
Government	2,970	-480	220	10	120	0	240	110	180

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

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